

GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS



January 19, 2022

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

As International President of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), an organization dedicated to community improvement by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service, I write in support of the bipartisan Violence Against Women Act of 2022 framework negotiated by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Richard Durbin (D-IL), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK).

The General Federation of Women's Clubs has supported local domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers long before the first Violence Against Women Act was passed by Congress in 1994. Today, we continue to help survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking with our advocacy, financial support, scholarships, donations of time and material resources, and commitment to prevention and education.

Volunteers provide community support and leadership at the local, state, and national levels, but basic federal programs must be expanded and strengthened to respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. The bill includes specific sections on teen dating violence/healthy relationships, campus sexual assault, protections for Native American and Alaska Native women and children, human trafficking for sexual purposes, and emergency housing support for survivors and their families. GFWC also supports the bill's efforts to address the needs of underserved populations, particularly those in rural communities, survivors with disabilities including Deaf survivors, survivors who are older adults, and children and youth survivors.

GFWC supports efforts to increase legal services funding and training to improve trauma-informed law enforcement response, and provides grants to promote the training of sexual assault forensic examiners to improve the response to sexual violence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused economic insecurity and many homes are less safe. It is time for significant funding for enhanced prevention programs, as well as expanded services. Supplying resources to implement evidence-based prevention programming makes our communities safer and, ultimately, saves taxpayer money. Prevention education that engages men and boys as allies and promotes healthy relationships is key to reducing gender-based violence.

We, the members of GFWC, urge the Senate to approve the Violence Against Women Act of 2022, enhancing education and prevention programs, services, and resources for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. It is time to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act and to meet the needs of women and families across the country. It is time for the Senate to act.

GFWC leadership includes an Executive Committee of eight and a 200 member-strong Board of Directors representing every state, including eight Region Presidents, 50 State Presidents, and 16 State Directors of Junior Clubs. At the grassroots level, there are more than 3,200 local club presidents representing over 75,000 clubwomen. The organization is governed by the Bylaws and directed by Resolutions adopted at our annual convention. www.gfwc.org.

Thank you for your critically important work to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act.

Please let us know if we can provide additional information. I can be reached at 864-414-5697 or MStClair@GFWC.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marian Simmons-St. Clair".

Marian Simmons-St.Clair
GFWC International President